

critical digest

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New York Theatre Diary

The Cretan Woman-Provincetown 7/7/54. Robinson Jeffers play with John Harkin, Jacqueline Brooks, Barbara Waide, Charles Aidman...Carousel scheduled to close July 25 at City Center...August Re-Opening Dates: Comedy in Music-Golden 8/2, Fifth Season at Cort 8/22, Almanac at Imperial 8/23...Midsummer's Night Dream- Met. Opera 9/21. Old Vio production limited run...All Summer Long- Coronet 8/28/54. Robert Anderson's new play with John Kerr, June Walker.

Stratford-Ontario-Shakespeare Festival

Measure for Measure-Opening production of Stratford, Ontario, Shakespeare festival starring Janet Mason won an "A" for effort from Atkinson, Times, and Kerr, Herald Tribune, but both NY critics thought play was not the wisest choice. Latter noted that inspite of a brilliantly staged and sharply spoken production it remains a truly dark and difficult play. Times man found it undistinguished except for Tanya Moiseiwitsch's bold, imaginative costumes and the wonderful apron stage she designed last year. Kerr recommended it only to those who want a chance to see a rarely performed play. Good or bad, Atkinson pointed out that the Stratford festival is a contribution to the cultural life of North America. Everyone recognizes that the festival is a wound enterprise, the stage is so illuminating and the professional standard of the acting so high. Cecil Clark directed cast which included Frances Hyland and Lloyd Bochner.

The Taming of the Shrew- Tyrene Guthrie's hectic comic book staging of comedy was frowned upon by Kerr, Herald Tribune, and Atkinson, Times. Done in a sort of modern dress, which Times critic labeled as a cross between a Mack Sennett cartoon and a dreshman cane race, Gotham reviewers feared most performances were under par for company. Atkinson's piece mentioned no names of actors, while Kerr's liked William Hutt and Eric House. The director's idea of the comedy, panned Atkinson, is adolescent, busy and noisy without being funny. The play slips by unnoticed due to an excess of comic gimmicks, added Kerr. The play is not as bad as Guthrie's attitude toward it assumes, Times critic concluded.

Hits Revisited

Sabrina Fair remains a sprightly comedy Sheaffer, Eagle, and Dash, Women's Wear agreed after a second visit to view several replacements in the cast. Critics agreed on fine acting of Leonora Dana and Frederic Warlock in the roles originally played by Margaret Sullivan and John Cromwell. Sheaffer found Ted Andrews in Joseph Cotton's role only adequate, while Dash found him capital.

Strawhat Tryout

Theatre '54, Dallas summer season opened with the debut of Ronald Alexander's The Inevitable Circle, a rewrite of last season's A Lady's Gentleman. Bark, Variety, suggests script could stand still more going over and would be aided by the addition of several characters to the 5 character comedy. Author directed his wife Mary Hartig in lead. Mugg okayed deft direction and fine performance.

 ' Off Broadway '

Original's Only co-producers Tom Hill and Donald Stuart will present their own new play The Chair as the next play of the playhouse at 100 7th Ave South. No opening date has been set. No Legal Grounds has closed.

Theatre De Lys will be used by L.B. Joselow for from 4 to 9 weeks starting in late Sept. Alex Gottlieb's Melina or a Norwegian play called The Kind Omission may be tried first.

Proscenium Productions have rented the Cherry Lane for fall and winter and will start their program Sept 22 with a production of Congreve's The Way of the World.

"The New Vic Company" will present Macbeth July 12-16 at John Hall Memorial, 342 E 83.

The Circle of Chalk, 13th century Chinese play, will be the 4th repertory program to be added to the Ensemble.

Major Barbara at Greenwich Mews won two favorable notices from Funke, Times, and Kerner, Women's Wear. Times drama editor noted that not all the players were equal to the crackle and style needed, but on the whole they provided a satisfactory performance. He found it difficult to understand why Shaw classic has not been presented on Broadway for 26 years. Performance has excitement and momentum, added Kerner. Both credited Karen Morley of turning in a fine job in the title role.

Of Mice and Men produced by an all Negro cast at Open Door is definitely worth seeing, okays Sheaffer, Eagle, Steinbeck play was an excellent choice for production by such a group.

 ' Yiddish Theatre '

Hebrew Actors Union has rented Elsmere Theatre, Bronx to make it part of chain of 3 local theatres devoted to Yiddish stage productions. Union also has rented Parkway, Brooklyn. Group will produce plays itself.

 ' Theatre Film Notes '

"The Rose Tattoo" film version to be produced by Hal Wallis will feature Burt Lancaster and Anna Magnani... "Porgy and Bess" will be filmed in color in March in Munich, Germany using the all Negro cast which is now in its third year of its revival run. Film will be made in two or three languages... William Powell will portray "Doc" in the film version of "Mr. Roberts" to be produced by Leland Hayward. "...Almanac" may be filmed during its summer vacation.

 ' Theatre Book Notes '

Random House has published text versions of "The Golden Apple", "The Ladies of the Corridor", and "Anniversary Waits" ... A new version of Paul Green's "The Lost Colony" has been published by University of North Carolina Press.

 ' Theatre TV & Radio Notes '

First CBS TV color "Best of Broadway" will be The Royal Family Sept 15 with Helen Hayes, Claudette Colbert, Frederic March and Charles Coburn... "Lemonade Lectures" will be presented by WNBC and WNBC-TV during summer by teachers from City College, Columbia, Fordham, New York and Rutgers Universities. Wednesday lectures fitted into radio and TV schedules will include drama topics... Dr. Frank Baxter will bring a new TV series Aug 1 on CBS TV entitled "Now and Then". Lectures to cover all literatures. "Shakespeare on TV" series will continue on Saturdays on WGBS TV... SEE BACK OF "PLAYGOER'S GUIDE" FOR "THEATRE ON TV THIS WEEK" LISTINGS.

 ' Vaudeville '

Will Mahoney heads the new Palace stage show. Also featured are Ben Yost's New Yorkers, Joe Morris and Susan North, Gayle and Barnett, Los Gatos. "The Outcast" with John Derek is the current film.

 ' Green Room Department '

KERR'S SUMMER PLAN... If Kerr, Herald Tribune, were running a summer theatre he would settle for two kinds of shows. Brand new ones and those old enough to have acquired a nice musty air of foolish innocence. The scheduled strawhat productions that whet his appetite are the plays he has forgotten, never seen or just heard of as the dubious masterworks of his youth. If he is really going to venture into corn country, he might just as well see corn. The Old Homestead, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Cat and the Canary are the kind he means.

COLUMN TIPS... Sardi set hears that George Abbott and Robert Fryer are feuding, reports Kilgallen...\$25,000 per appearance said to be bait for CBS TV Best of Broadway color shows hears Kaufman, Hollywood Reporter...T. Bankhead planning a one woman show, hints Sullivan.

GOLDEN'S 80 B-DAY... 7500 Bayside neighbors, 10 bands and choral groups, a chorus line of 4 and 5 year old Florodora girls and two juvenile baseball teams helped producer John Golden celebrate his 80th birthday on his Long Island estate reports Sims, Herald Tribune. The former Pearl White estate has six baseball diamonds for neighborhood kids. Producer sees all the Broadway shows at matinees.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Music Box is now the favorite theatre of Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun...Arabian Nights show needs is a Josh Logan who can whip elements into an al fresco production of surpassing merit, suggests Dash, Women's Wear New Yorkers don't have to sleep on fire escapes or in Central Park on warm nights, they can go to Jones Beach and Flushing Meadows outdoor shows and cool off, recommends Chapman, News.

SLEEPY LEAGUE... League of NY Theatres was asleep, as usual, when the recent city amusement tax snarl came along and will be caught asleep again when the next crisis appears, pans Sylvester, News. But producer Alexander Cohen files letter with News drama editor pointing out that without the guidance of the League many production problems would be an impossible job.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... John Raitt this year had the unusual distinction of opening and closing the musical season, points out News, World Telegram, Carnival in Flanders and Pajama Game are the items. This is the first time he has appeared in a show in modern clothes...Leo Kers and Joseph Kramm, Ensemble producers, plan to keep alive the standards of good theatre and to develop a company that will be able to take its place alongside of the Old Vic, Kramm told Morehouse, WTS.

 ' Pros & Cons by TMK '

"Air conditioning" with emphasis on those all important quotes has come to Off Broadway. Of the three openings listed for Greenwich Village this week, each management proudly boasts in its ads and press releases that it is "cool." Past experience has made theatre fans skeptics on this score. It is almost an unwritten rule that the bigger the "Air conditioning" appears in the ads, the hotter the theatre is. While on the other hand, motion picture "air conditioning" systems are really what they are advertised to be.

Actually theatre air conditioning systems, on or off Broadway, never have a real chance to prove themselves. For reasons best known to management the systems are turned off after the first five minutes of most shows. If this is to conserve the producer's expenses or the actor's voices, the result is uncomfortably the same. No other industry in the country closes down for an entire season because of the lack of the proper equipment.

The NYC Council and Board of Estimate approved an amendment to the 5% NYC amusement and sport ticket tax law exempting tickets purchased before July 1 for events after July 10. The tax on tickets for events from July 1 to July 10 will be paid by the managements, not by the patrons. The 5% city tax added to the 10% federal tax makes many ticket prices come out in pennies, such as \$5.23 and \$2.88.

Plays

Ondine, Wonderful Town closed, Victor Borge's Comedy in Music closed for vacation the month of July...Charles Bowden and Richard Barr plan to produce Ronald Alexander's Angelic and George Kelly's Torchbearers next season...Michael Rose plans to produce Maxwell Straus's The Burning Wind next fall...300 Kiwaras Club members from Bethlehem, Pa visited Techhouse of August Moon...Warren Munsell, treasurer of American Theatre Wing will produce the Wings on the Wing revue on Broadway this fall...National Theatre Arts Council has been formed to aid all aspects of US theatre, Albin O Holder is chairman.

People

Lloyd Bridges replaces Franchot Tone in On Men, On Women July 10...Francis Compton replaces Philip Coolidge in Kismet July 12...Sam Jaffe will play the Inquisitor in Saint Joan starring Jean Arthur...Lynn Riggs, author of "Green Grows the Lilaos" used as basis for Oklahoma died at age 84...Arthur L. McCormick, author of many spectacular stage plays in the 1900's including The Lady and the Lady in 1906 died at age 81.

Award Dept

\$1000 in prizes will be awarded by John Golden to high school students for the best one act plays on subjects advocating better understanding and appreciation of the UN. Typewritten scripts should be sent to John Effrat, Stage Managers Association, 246 W 44 before Oct 1

Summer Playhouses

Two seldom seen G.B. Shaw plays are being presented in Penn. summer playhouses this week. Too True to Be Good with Zachary Scott and Ruth Ford will be produced at Philadelphia's Civic Playhouse in the Park staged by Albert Marre, while Fanny's First Play will be presented at Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope with Nydia Westman and Terence Kilburn...The Lost Colony opened its 14th season at Manteo, N.C....Judith Evelyn will be featured in 4 plays in July at Ivy Tower Playhouse, Spring Lake, NJ...A.B. Shiffrin's new comedy A Burst of Summer debuts at Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, PA. July 12 with Murray Hamilton...Clarence Derwent will play Shylock in Merchant of Venice production at Antioch Shakespeare Festival, Yellow Springs, Ohio Jul 28-

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